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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000947

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/A, EUR, PM AND EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2018
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA TO INVESTIGATE SHOOTING OF AFGHANISTAN
DISTRICT CHIEF ROZI KHAN

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole. Reasons: 1.4(b)(d)

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) The Australian government maintains that responsibility for the death of Chora District Governor Rozi Khan, killed during a September 18 shooting incident that involved Australian Special Forces in southern Afghanistan, has not yet been determined. The GOA announced it is cooperating with ISAF and Afghan authorities, who are launching a joint investigation, and that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) will launch its own investigation into the matter. Local media has carried several stories with differing details. Public reaction has been muted so far. End summary.

2. (U) The Australian Department of Defence released a statement September 19 with few details but emphasizing that the Australian forces acted in accordance with their rules of engagement and that their actions were appropriate and proportionate to the circumstance. The text of the release follows at para 5, below.

3. (C/NF) Jon Merrill, Afghanistan Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, told us the media coverage had unhelpfully conflated what may have been different accounts or perhaps different incidents. He reiterated that the GOA was not yet in a position to confirm responsibility for any of the deaths involved in the shooting, including that of Rozi Khan, and noted that other entities, including the Afghan National Police, had been in the vicinity of the incident.

4. (U) Most Australian media carried accounts of the incident on the September 18, with somewhat less coverage during the morning of September 19, but public reaction has been muted so far.

5. (U) Text of the Australian Department of Defence media release follows:

Begin text:

DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE
Friday, 19 September 2008

AUSTRALIAN FORCES UNDER FIRE IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN - UPDATE

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is working closely with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan authorities who will launch a joint ISAF / Afghan Government investigation into the incident that occurred on 18 September. The ADF will also conduct a full investigation.

Initial ADF reporting indicates that the Special Operations

Task Group (SOTG) patrol was moving on foot towards a subsequent activity when they were fired on from a number of locations by unknown attackers. The SOTG patrol returned fire in self-defence.

Initial assessment indicates that the SOTG personnel acted in accordance with their Rules of Engagement and that their actions were appropriate and proportionate in what was a complex and lethal environment.

The ADF can confirm that Chora District Governor and tribal leader, Rozi Khan, was among those killed. It is not possible at this time to determine that he was killed by ADF fire.

A number of groups, including Afghan National Police personnel, were in the vicinity of the incident. No ADF personnel were wounded, however initial reporting indicates that a number of local nationals were killed or wounded in the exchange of fire. The identity of these additional personnel will be determined as part of the investigations that are now underway.

Australian Forces make every effort to minimise the risk of any damage, injury or loss of life to non-combatants in the course of its operations. However, the ADF reserves the right to protect its own people.
Qto protect its own people.

The ADF will not release additional information on this matter until the ADF and ISAF / Afghan Government investigations are complete.

End text.

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